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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DJIBOUTI 000437

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SUBJECT: IGAD EXECUTIVE SECRETARY BRIEFS AMBASSADOR ON
MARCH 22 IGAD MINISTERIAL

REF: DJIBOUTI 413

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MARGUERITA D. RAGSDALE.
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) Summary: The March 22 Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Ministerial in Djibouti had three agenda items: Somalia and Sudan peace processes, election of an Executive Secretariat and arrears of IGAD member states. On Sudan, IGAD ministers are pleased at progress made in Kenya peace talks and are certain an Abyei agreement will be reached, enabling signing of a final peace accord. On Somalia, the reconciliation conference is seen as a fragile entity that cannot move forward progressively absent return of dissenting warlords. In remarks to Ambassador, IGAD Executive Secretary General Hamad Bashir Attallah made a plea for U.S. intervention and commitment at the political level and hinted at Ethiopian complicity in a bid to de-stabilize the Reconciliation Conference. IGAD's current Executive Secretary was re-confirmed as Executive Secretary for a

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further four years and Uganda received much flack for an arrears amount to IGAD totaling USD 3 million. End summary.

2. (C) Ambassador Hamad Bashir Attallah, Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Secretariat, briefed Ambassador March 25 on the March 22

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Djibouti meeting of IGAD ministers. Ambassador, along with other diplomatic corps members, had attended the opening session of the Ministerial, in which Uganda's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Augustine Nshimye (in Uganda's capacity as chair) outlined the progress of the Somalia Reconciliation Conference. According to Attallah, three agenda items were covered in the closed session which followed: the Somalia and Sudan peace processes, election of an Executive Secretary of IGAD, and arrears of IGAD member states.

Sudan and Somalia

3. (C) On Sudan, Attallah said Dr. Mustafa Osman Ismail, Sudan's Foreign Minister, briefed on the Sudan peace process, stating that it is on track despite the lingering dispute over Abyei. Ismail also said that the parties are studying closely the Danforth compromise proposal on Abyei. (Note: Attallah acknowledged the SPLM/A's acceptance of the Danforth proposal and said he believes Sudan will also accept. End Note) Ismail said both the Government of Sudan and the SPLM/A were committed to peace -- a statement reiterated by Kenya's State Minister and Special Envoy Kiplagat. The Kenyan minister urged in the March 22 session that the difficulty over Abyei not be exaggerated.

4. (C) On Somalia, the Kenyan minister laid out the current problems with the Conference. Kiplagat contributed, noting the controversy over the issue of Members of Parliament (see reftel) which precluded movement into the third phase of talks. They noted that Somalis who withdrew in Nairobi from the process have still not returned, but said Kenya would approach the dissenting group again to urge a return to negotiations.

5. (C) Attallah gave Ambassador Ragsdale a copy of a declaration sent March 19 in Nairobi to the IGAD chair, Ministerial Committee Chairs, the Facilitation Committee chair, the Secretariat, Partners Forum, and member states from certain Somalis threatening to withdraw from the Conference. He said he and the IGAD ministers were very troubled by this document. For the first time, so many prominent and influential members of the conference had signed and all threatened to withdraw. The Kenyan envoy dismissed it as only a threat, Attallah said, but the concern among ministers remains deep. Ministers agreed to meet again in two weeks in Nairobi for further talks.

A Plea to the United States

16. (C) Attallah urged that the United States intervene now on what he called "the political side" of the Somalia conflict and in a direct way. He said so many ask why America is so involved in Sudan and chooses to ignore completely what is going on in Somalia? Ambassador noted U.S. continuing efforts to engage on Somalia and its financial support to the Conference. Attallah countered that much of U.S. engagement is at the military level. It has put in place a military organ to watch Somalia but not one to influence the political process. America has to play a role, he stated, in the same way that Italy, Great Britain and the EU is playing a role. Britain, for example, has sent a high level special envoy. Attallah warned that Somalia could disintegrate into further chaos, become another Afghanistan or another haven for terrorists if attention to the political dimension is not paid. He added that Somalis want the U.S. to be there and a U.S. presence is more important than its financial support. Attallah commented that the United States genuinely has made a difference in the Sudan peace process and believes that success could be a model for Somalia. He also praised a statement the U.S. made three weeks ago on Somalia, claiming it was the first comment of this kind coming from the U.S.

Election and Arrears

17. (C) On the ministerial's second agenda item, election of the Executive Secretary, Attallah said Kenya had put forth a candidate to challenge him but eventually withdrew that candidate. IGAD members decided, admittedly with some contention, Attallah said, that he would continue as Executive Secretary. Attallah, a Sudanese national, will now serve an additional four years.

18. (C) On the third agenda item, financial contributions and arrears, Attallah said a great deal of discussion took place in the ministerial over the failure of Uganda, since the establishment of IGAD, to pay any of its financial obligations to the organization. He said Uganda owed USD 3 million in arrears to IGAD. The Uganda ministers present acknowledged the arrears, but tried to place them in the context of other arrears owed to organizations in which Uganda is a member. Attallah said he heard no viable explanation for Uganda's refusal to pay. The Ugandans made a commitment on behalf of their government to try to clear up arrears but had no real authority, according to Attallah, to speak for President Museveni. The second worst offender on the arrears side, Attallah said, is Djibouti, which owes USD 500,000. Djibouti needs to demonstrate, he continued, that it is committed to IGAD by settling these arrears, especially since it derives considerable benefit from the presence of the IGAD Secretariat, including holding 50 per cent of all Secretariat jobs. Attallah added that Sudan, Ethiopia,

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Eritrea, and Kenya, by contrast, have been "very faithful" to IGAD.

An Ethiopian Role

19. (C) Ambassador met separately at the Sheraton Hotel March 24 with Yusuf Hassan Ibrahim, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Somalia Transitional National Government (TNG). Ibrahim stated to her that the IGAD ministers were worried most about the flow of arms into Somalia and pointed an accusatory finger directly and inflexibly at Ethiopia. Ibrahim also queried Ethiopia's sincerity in wanting a successful peace process. In Attallah's meeting with Ambassador, Attallah pointed out that all the signatories to the March 19 document referred to here were allied with Ethiopia. In addition, Hassan Abshir Farah, TNG Prime Minister, who also signed the document, was recently relieved of his responsibility (officially, although he remains in the process because of his status as earlier signatory to the agreement) and now appears to be allying with the Ethiopia group, according to Attallah. The same, Attallah said, applies to Abdallah Derow, Speaker of the Parliament for TNG. Attallah, like Ibrahim, reiterated the importance of Ethiopia to the success of the Somalia Reconciliation Conference. End comment.
RAGSDALE